

Break me out tonight, I wanna see the sun rising by TheMikeWheelers (jasongracefully)

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Summary:

“I like space. Everything is so big and limitless. The universe is always expanding. It's not-” El stopped for a moment before finding the right word, “It's not trapped. I want to be like that.”

When Eleven is having trouble sleeping she sneaks out and brings Mike to go stargazing.

Break me out tonight, I wanna see the sun rising

Author's Note:

Title is from the song Break Me Out by The Rescues

El felt her hands tighten on the steering wheel, enjoying the rush of freedom knowing she was in control, she could drive off anymore if she wanted to. Her fingers started to pick at the loose pieces of leather, and she concentrated on the lights passing by her. There weren't many lights at this time of night in Hawkins, but she was doing her best to distract herself.

Nightmares hadn't plagued her in a long time, but she still had enough trouble falling asleep to being with. Lately there had been more and more nights where she was up late unable to sleep, and the darkness and silence of the night drove her insane. She was alone with her thoughts and nothing was stopping her from overthinking until she couldn't breathe.

This wasn't the first time she had showed up outside Mike's house and picked him up to distract herself. They never really talked during these late-night adventures, El didn't want to. She just wanted to get out of the house, to drive and know she could go anywhere, to stop the feeling of lying in a room all night unable to sleep while her mind taunted her until she felt like the walls were caving in. She just wanted to escape.

Mike figured these late nights where El snuck out probably happened a lot more often than he knew of, the growing dark circles under her eyes were proof of that. But on the nights when she asked him to come with her, he was always right by her side and asked no questions about what she was doing. He could tell she was upset, she was trying to distract herself, but she never wanted to talk about it.

Sometimes they would head a few towns over and find some restaurant that was open all night, or they would just drive aimlessly and watch the lights and trees and buildings go by. Other times El rather used Mike himself as a distraction from whatever she was running from, and they would end up cuddling and kissing until El

could feel her heart stop aching to run.

It was nearly 4AM. Mike was only up himself because he'd lost track of the time while working on a campaign when he heard her voice in his mind asking if he wanted to meet her outside. She recently figured out that aspect of her powers, her telepathy allowed her to talk to people in their heads when she concentrated, and she'd been using that power quite a lot lately.

Mike hadn't even bothered to ask where they were going until the car pulled over outside the park.

"There's a blanket in the backseat, can you grab it?" She spoke for the first time that night, her voice small and unsure.

Mike reached into the back and recognized the red plaid blanket sitting on the middle seat. It used to be his, but he gave it to El when she first opened up to him about her trouble sleeping. He told her to just think of him whenever she couldn't sleep, to use his blanket, and have it remind her that she was safe. He was always going to protect her.

She swore to him that it helped, and some nights the blanket was enough to get her to fall asleep. But other times it wasn't enough apparently, clearly shown by all the nights she was sneaking out unable to sleep and only able to concentrate on getting out of the house.

El opened the door and slid out of the car. She walked towards a spot in the middle of an open clearing and grabbed the blanket from Mike, spreading it out over the ground before laying down. Mike hesitated before laying down next to her, realistically worried about all the bugs at this time of night, unrealistically worried about the possibility of foxes or coyotes or some other animals from the woods coming out, but El looked up at him with her big eyes that seemed to radiate in the moonlight.

She didn't say much, but she didn't have to. That was what Mike loved about the two of them, they didn't have to say everything, they knew each other so well that not a word needed to be spoken for them to know what the other needed. El's eyes were calling for him,

all her fear and desperation begging him to lie down next to her.

Mike never really understood what was bothering her on the nights she spent with him like this, but something about the world going dark and the stars coming out made everything so much more vulnerable. He may not have understood, but he knew she needed him.

Mike sat down beside her and leaned back. He was too tall for the blanket, so the grass tickled his feet, but he tried to ignore it, instead reaching towards El's hand and squeezing it, another one of their silent ways to communicate. She snuggled closer to him, tucking her head into his neck. Mike was so focused on the sounds of crickets he almost didn't hear her when she spoke up.

"I like watching the stars," El whispered, gaining Mike's attention as he turned to face her, his face now resting against the side of hers, "I've been coming out here every night the last week."

Mike tried to think of the last time El had brought him with her on one of her late-nights sneaking out. It was a week and a half ago, they went out and got milkshakes and tried every flavor until they could pick a favorite.

Since then Mike had been hoping she was sleeping well and doing okay at night and that's why she hadn't brought him out anywhere, but he knew that was a dream. As much as El loved him, she liked to be alone when she was upset. He knew the majority of the time she snuck out at night she probably wasn't bringing him with her, but he had no idea she had been going out *every night*. Concerned filled his veins, "Have you been sleeping at all?"

"A little bit. A couple hours every night." Mike wanted to say something, to express that that wasn't healthy and she needed to sleep more, but she turned to him and met his eyes, and he could see it all in her expression. *I'm trying. I promise.*

"Do you want to talk about it?" She never wanted to talk about what was bothering her on these nights, but he persisted, "It's never gonna get better if you don't open up about what's bothering you."

Eleven didn't respond to him, instead keeping her gaze fixed on the sky above them before repeating what she had said earlier, "I like watching the stars." She paused for a few seconds, contemplating what to say, how to say it, before the words had found their way to her mouth.

"I like space. Everything is so big and limitless. The universe is always expanding. It's not-" She stopped for a moment before finding the right word, "It's not trapped. I want to be like that."

"Well if it makes you feel any better, you are my universe," Mike tried to joke, but the tension remained all over El's face. He frowned and leaned over to wrap an arm around her, "Hey, you aren't trapped, you know that. Not anymore."

"I know," She sighed, "But sometimes I'll just be laying awake at night, and everything gets to be so overwhelming." Her voice was monotone, as if she was worried if she put any emotion into the words then she'd be making herself even more vulnerable than she already was, "And then I start to feel trapped all over again and I can't breathe and then I always end up sneaking out just so I can run away for a little bit."

El kept her eyes fixed on the stars above them and he was worried for a second that she wouldn't open up like that again, but then she continued, her voice softer this time, "I know I shouldn't feel this trapped whenever I get upset, but I can't help it. I'm scared I'm always gonna end up running away because of it."

"But you aren't running away," Mike tried to assure her, squeezing her hand as tightly as he could, "You've brought me with you plenty of times, so you aren't running away from me. Do you ever bring anyone else?"

El shrugged, "Sometimes Will comes with me when he's awake, but I know he has enough trouble sleeping himself. And I don't want to wake Joyce or Hopper."

"Well then you've got Will and me that you definitely aren't running away from. And your parents and Jonathan and all our friends, they'd come out here in an instant with you if you asked. You can try and

run away, but all of us love you too much to let you.” She turned to him and attempted to give a weak smile, wanting to let him know she appreciated what he was saying, but there was a reason she never opened up about this. Nothing anyone could say would ever make her feel better.

Mike didn't yet accept his defeat though. In the minutes that followed, the two watched the stars in silence, and he couldn't seem to wrap his head around how El thought she was any different than one of those stars and he sighed, “You can't help it if you can't sleep, or if you feel trapped, but you can never run away, El. Not from me. I'm here to stay and you can't get away from me if you tried.”

He bit back a grin as he turned to face her, his hand coming up to her hair. El gave her little half-smile that Mike had fallen in love with and she leaned to press a kiss onto his cheek, where a blush was forming even if she couldn't see it in the dark.

“You're looking at this all wrong to begin with,” Mike wrapped his arm around her waist, pulling her closer to him, their noses almost touching, “You aren't running away. These late-nights sneaking out are our adventures. I mean, without them then how would you know that your favorite milkshake flavor is cherry? And how would I know how cute you look with a cherry milkshake mustache on your face?”

El grinned widely this time, and Mike could feel his heart beat faster. It didn't matter how long they'd known each other now, he still got butterflies every time he saw her smile. Her hands found their way to his cheeks and she decided to flirt back, “I think you could have guessed how I'd look.”

“Yeah, maybe, but I still wouldn't have gotten a chance to see.” Mike countered, before leaning in and kissing her nose, then her cheek, then finally on the lips. El smiled into the kiss. An adventure. That's all this was. She wasn't running away or anything, she was just going on an adventure to clear her mind. She didn't have to worry that she was running away from everything just because she was upset.

When they pulled away, Mike saw El attempt to stifle a yawn and grinned, “You're tired,” He noted, and El nodded. By now the sun was coming up and they could see the sunrise in the spaces between

the trees. It was a Saturday, so neither of them had to worry about school or anything today, they could go home and sleep all day. El might actually get a decent amount of sleep for once.

“You know, just ‘cause you have trouble falling asleep doesn't mean there's nothing you can do about it.”

“I already have your blanket,” El teased, but Mike didn't joke back, wanting to be serious so he could stop worrying about her so much.

“You know you can always call me when you can't sleep, and I know you don't want to wake Joyce or the Chief but you know they'd want you to wake them up if you can't sleep or if you're upset. And there's a billion other things you can do to help you fall asleep.”

El turned onto her back, watching the sky where the stars were visible only 15 minutes ago, but was now painted with hundreds of shades of orange and red as the sun came up, “Can we just watch the sunrise?” She asked. Mike didn't want to drop the topic, he had already spent so much time worrying about her with this, but he knew she had listened to what he said, and she was exhausted now--she'd barely slept in a week.

Mike leaned on his back as well, taking the opportunity scoot closer over to El. They watched as the sun came up in silence, but Mike couldn't contain his laughter when he heard quiet snoring next to him and turned to see El had passed out while watching. As much as it pained him to wake her, he knew that he wasn't strong enough to carry her back to the car on his own, and shook her awake.

She groaned in her sleep and rolled over, burying her face into Mike's chest. She didn't want to move from off the park ground, which happened to be quite comfortable when you're as sleep deprived as El.

“El, come on, you gotta get home. You can sleep there.”

“Home?” She grumbled, and felt a sudden desire to be back at her house, in her own room and in her own bed. She didn't want to be out here in the park anymore, feeling trapped at the idea of being stuck in the confines of her four walls all throughout her sleepless

nights.

Maybe El would always have trouble sleeping, and maybe sometimes deep into those sleepless nights she would overthink, and when she got overwhelmed she'd feel an urge to run. That crave for limitlessness would always be with her. She'd always want to be like all the stars she'd see up in the night sky, boundless in a constantly expanding universe.

But what El didn't know was that she was already a star. To Mike, and all the other people who loved her, she was the sun itself.

The fact that she had these people was what made her so unbounded. Even when those overwhelming feelings hit, and her mind's first response was to run from everything, she always had the people she loved keeping her grounded. And that wasn't being trapped, that was having a home.

Mike grinned and stood up, reaching out a hand for El to grab.

“Yeah, home.”